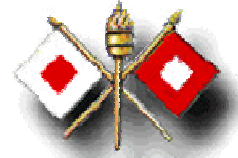


The Desert Voice



14-20 June 2004

Commander's Corner

TIKRIT, IRAQ & AO DANGER – Greetings once again from north-central Iraq. Like the last several weeks, it was quite warm with the highs ranging from 106-110 during the day. On a positive note, there is usually a breeze that accompanies the heat and while it's a bit like standing behind a jet engine, a warm breeze is better than no breeze.

The focus of the week was working in the commercial communications systems at the Division Command Posts here on FOB Danger and at FOB Speicher. Though we still have a ways to go, tremendous progress was made. We had the help of some technicians (NCOs) from the 7th Signal Brigade and I want to publicly thank SSG Cooper and SSG Howard for lending their expertise to our effort.

Other highlights this week included C Company's Change of Command, VTCs with family members and preparation for the 42nd Infantry Division's Pre-Deployment Site Survey.

This past Tuesday we said goodbye to CPT Poston and welcomed CPT Longwill at a change of command ceremony that was performed in front of the "Bombed-Out Palace" on FOB Danger and in true Charlie Rock form – very professionally done. The 1st Infantry Band participated and made the event exceptionally special. CPT Longwill hosted a nice reception that followed. More about the reception in a moment.

We conducted our first series of VTCs with family members this week. The sessions went very well with few technical difficulties. We will continue to do these as long as there is an interest. Please contact the rear detachment for scheduling.

The division that will ultimately relieve the Big Red One is the 42nd Infantry Division out of the New York National Guard. Representatives from the 42d ID will visit us this coming week to survey the operation that they will assume next year. It goes without saying that we anxiously await their arrival.



An update to the R&R program is that the Division's allocations will increase to 106 per day in the month of July. For the Signal Task Force that translate to approximately 80 per month. We are continuing to work towards getting everyone the chance for R&R sometime during our rotation.

My war story this week will reveal the inside story on "Operation Cake Mix". While this story probably won't make CNN, it is nevertheless a tale of heroic action and selflessness. C Company's change of command was the day after the Army's

228th's birthday. The one thing birthday's and changes of command have in common is cake. C Company had submitted the request to have our Brown & Root contracted dining facility make a cake for the reception following the change of command ceremony.

Brown & Root fussed a bit about meeting the requirement, but with a little encouragement from Command Sergeant Major Butler they agreed to make the cake. Now, you know that Brown & Root only hires top-notch, well qualified, well educated employees. Given the salaries these people make, the tax payers should expect nothing less. The day before the change of command, Brown & Root notified 1SG Brown that there had been a mix up with the requests for cake for the Army birthday celebration and C Company's change of command and that our cake had been made but got tossed out with the garbage. Further, that they had no more cake mix because it all went towards the Army's birthday cake.

Now, no change of command is complete without some cake at the reception. In times like these, we always turn to great NCOs to save the day. CSM Butler rallied my patrol team together, hastily put together a plan, and convoyed through enemy territory to FOB Ramagen to obtain the cake mix and eggs so that C Company could have a proper reception. The operation was a complete success, and everyone enjoyed the fruits of his sacrifice at the reception.



CPT Longwill and 1SG Brown with their cake!!

Until next week, thanks for all the thoughts and prayers, it does make a difference.

Alpha Company

This week's newsletter will be rather short. The report from around the company is that absolutely nothing of interest happened. One event which can be written about was the cookout on the Signal Palace Grounds on FOB Speicher. Everyone gathered for an evening of fun, music and volleyball. Volleyball here takes on a little different meaning as the court surface is composed of gravel. A lot of people use sand, but Alpha Company insists on only the finest gravel surfaces for sporting events. By some stroke of luck, we managed to avoid any twisted ankles and any injury other than minor scrapes and bruises.

SFC Sadler, the Headquarters Platoon Sergeant, did the planning for the festivities and the headquarters section did the set up. SSG Johnson, the Motor Sergeant, and SGT Kent, the Electronic Maintenance Sergeant, displayed their culinary talents on the grill and turned out some delicious ribs, hamburgers and chicken. The rest of the company displayed their talents at consuming delicious ribs, hamburgers and chicken. Soft drinks and non-alcoholic malt beverages flowed freely until dark, when everyone had to go in

because we really don't have any outside lights.

Overall, the day was filled with friendship and fun. Soldiers were free to sit under the solar shade and complain about the heat together. SGT Williams, who somehow has a whole DJ setup here in Iraq, provided an eclectic selection of music to entertain everyone. I guess the real point of this story goes back to how SGT Williams has all of that audio equipment in Iraq. We don't live in buildings, we don't have indoor plumbing and rely on generators which don't always work for electrical power, but SGT Williams has a DJ set up. As troubling as that was, everyone had a great time and enjoyed some great food, music and companionship. Life couldn't get much better.



SPC Ethington and PFC Eckert enjoy a hamburger



SGT Cornell looks on and PFC Gorman, LT Gates, PFC Sells, SGT Robles, SGT Prado play out their match.



SGT Kent cooks while SSG Porter gives advice



SGT Robles, PV2 Clark, PFC Eckert, SPC Gonzales, SPC Cecil and SPC Ethington

Alpha Company's newest member arrived this week. SSG Marlin White, a 31R, came to 1st ID from 327th Signal Battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. SSG White originally hails from Houston, Texas. His wife, Yolanda and three children Tyrenzo, Dugrandal, Jalen are remaining in North Carolina. Soon after his arrival at Speicher he was deported to FOB Remagen where he'll learn water marksmanship techniques and animal trapping skills from 1st Platoon. May God have mercy on his soul.



SSG White

As you can see, life has gotten uneventful for us here. We need some new blood. Pack a few things, get a plane ticket and come on out. There is room for more and we need the excitement. There's no need for you to sit home and think about what it could be like if you were in Iraq. You can make that dream come true today. Wish you were here, XOXOXO

Bravo Company

Greetings from FOB Warhorse!!! Things are going well for us on this side of the world. Despite the increasing temperatures, morale is high, but wanting to see our loved ones is higher. We were proud this week to build ourselves a Super Radio Access Unit (RAU) and to finally give Remote RAU 52 a mission. We had a visit from LTC Garrison and CSM Butler and we had a promotion this week. We also had an interesting debate on the weather and a strange push-up contest. Finally we had some sadness this week as we say farewell to some individuals.

Remote RAU 52 was turned into a Super RAU this week. What does that mean? It means that the RAU, which previously could not process data, now can. It can now provide the Secret Internet to its subscribers. After it was built, we received the mission to take our new Super RAU to the Baqubah Police Station, and we pulled out SEN Team B62. It was a very easy transition for our new Super RAU team, and they were happy to get a mission.



SGT Thompson hard at work in his new Super Rau



This is where the ground rod goes

LTC Garrison and CSM Butler stopped by our humble area, in true VIP fashion. They flew in by a Blackhawk, seems an appropriate way to travel when visiting the "Blackhawks" at work. They were here to visit and say hello to everyone and see how much "better" FOB Warhorse is than FOB Danger. Besides who needs all of those palaces anyway? While they were here they handed out a few of the new Battalion coins. Very nice I must say. The coins were handed out to SGT Balacy, PFC Zuniga, and SPC Sargent.



New coin FRONT



New Coin BACK

This week in the motorpool, in between doing their daily maintenance, they decided to have a unique push-up contest. Although only a few entered, the results were quite humorous. They decided that they wanted to see who could do the most "One-Armed" push-ups. The competition was fierce; it even smoked a few of them. But SGT Graves and SPC Sargent tied with five push-ups a piece. Some of the others did not fare as well.



SGT Graves knocks them out



SPC Sargent knocks his out in style (it must be the glasses)



PV2 Scherger gave us his all



SPC Alexander tried as well

We also had interesting debate this week on the weather. As temperatures continue to rise, I asked the question what is better, extreme heat or extreme cold. There were many good points for the heat such as, swimming, sun tans, and more outdoor activities. But there were also some good points about the cold, and they were skiing, snowboarding, and snowball fights. What makes this even stranger is the fact that in heat, we always try to cool ourselves off, and when it is cold we are always trying to warm up. But I think if given the option, even the most die hard person for heat, wants to find some place a whole lot cooler. I guess the jury is

still out and this debate will rage for the rest of our time here. It will probably go down as one of the great debates, like the most famous debate which is a classic that will never be solved: "Tastes Great" or "Less Filling".

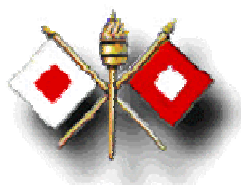
This week we say goodbye to some great folks. SEN B62 was a strong SEN for us, and did their mission successfully at the Baqubah Police Station. But their services are needed elsewhere. They will be heading to FOB Brassfield-Mora to support 1-26 IN. They will be missed here in our area.

We also say goodbye to SFC Korey Carter. He has been the Transmission Section Sergeant for NC52 since his arrival in December 2003. He is heading Charlie Company to take over as the Platoon Sergeant for the LEN platoon.



SFC Carter saying goodbye

We will also promote PFC James to Specialist tomorrow. So I will add those pictures next week. Because I know that you are getting tired of my writings, I will sign off this week and leave you with some more pictures. Thank you for everything, take care and have a great week.



SPC Gianessen, SPC Mitchell and SSG Spradley relaxing at the police station



SPC Johnson building something



PFC Bean and SGT Hansen hard at work

Charlie Company

Greetings family and friends of Charlie Rock! My name is CPT Dawn Longwill, and I am absolutely honored and excited to be the new Commander of Charlie Company. Just a little about me – I am from Iowa, and graduated from the University of Nebraska – GO BIG RED! I have served 18 months in Korea and two years at Fort Lewis, in addition to the year or so of schooling at Fort Gordon on two different occasions. I have been in the 1st ID for a year now, working as the Division Signal Plans Officer in Wuerzburg. I am

very happily married to SSG (P) William Longwill, who is stationed with 1/10 Special Forces Group in Stuttgart, Germany. We both are eager to get to know you all, and be a part of the Charlie Rock Family!

The Change of Command ceremony was held on Tuesday, 15 JUN 04. It was a bright, sunny and extremely hot day, as most days are around here in lovely Tikrit. 1SG Brown put together a fabulous ceremony, complete with the 1ID band and flying BN colors, and the Charlie Rock soldiers were standing tall and proud as they honored the hard work and leadership of CPT Poston and welcomed me to this position. Every change of command ceremony has an exchange of the guidon, which is a symbolic act. As CPT Poston passed the guidon to LTC Garrison, he officially relinquished command. As LTC Garrison handed the guidon to me, I accepted the responsibility of the soldiers and mission of Charlie Rock with pride.



Rock Steady soldiers looking sharp in formation at the Change of Command ceremony.



LTC Garrison passes the C Co guidon to CPT Longwill, the new Charlie commander.

After the ceremony, we had a reception at the MWR Sports Bar where I had a local caterer that serves at Division functions come in with Iraqi food. Most of the soldiers thought the food tasted great, and appreciated the opportunity to try food from a different culture. However, the next few days were challenging around the company, as soldiers had upset stomachs from the different spices and oils used in the preparation of the food. While we all went through the pain together, I hope they still remember the good food and different culture aspects of the occasion.

Elsewhere around the company, we have a few more reasons to be proud. SSG Dwayne Washington's long awaited sequence number was selected for his 01 JUL 04 promotion to the senior Non-Commissioned Officer rank of Sergeant First Class. SGT Jason McGowan made the promotion points to be promoted to Staff Sergeant on 01 JUL 04, so we are looking forward to pinning that rocker on him. Also, SPC Markus Sukmanowsky will be promoted to Sergeant on the 01 JUL 04 and join the ranks of the Non-Commissioned Officers. Congratulations to these outstanding soldiers, and we will send photos after the ceremony.

2nd Platoon (NC53) was busy last weekend with some surprise medical training. The 2nd platoon leadership coordinated with the TMC to stage some medical emergencies for the soldiers to practice their combat lifesaver skills. They staged a soldier falling out of the shelter, and also an electric charge from a generator. The training was a great success, and all involved were grateful their fellow troops were only acting. Kudos to the actors

who staged a brilliant performance!



SPC Codell Turner and SPC Michael Smith carry SPC Dario Storni on a stretcher after his staged accident.

I would like to take this opportunity to pass along a sincere thank you to CPT Laura Poston, who has served as the Family Readiness Group leader. Her compassion and involvement benefited the Charlie Rock families with numerous issues. With the change of command comes the changing of the FRG leadership. Charlie is looking for a spouse back in Germany that would like to assume Laura's duties as the FRG Leader, although she has volunteered to stay on until a new FRG leader is identified. Leader training is available at the ACS office, if you would like, and we would be happy to arrange it for you. Please let us know – we are anxious to work with you and all the spouses and soldiers of Charlie Rock.

Finally, I would like to say a special HAPPY FATHER'S DAY to all the fathers here in Iraq, back in Germany and wherever your father may be. Thanks for all that you are and all that you do! We love you, Dad!

Please continue to keep us all in your thoughts and prayers. Until next week, ROCK STEADY!

HHC

Let me start out this week in saying the heat is now on, averaging about a 110 everyday. The heat is definitely here! I must say we all love our S4 for all of the air conditioners he has either bought or acquired to keep us as cool as possible. Here he is below next to one of the big air conditioners that keep the ALOC nice and cool.



CPT Romanowski chillin' in the ALOC on FOB Danger

Of course the rest of us get the small ones, but you know those who hold the purse strings get all of the benefits. Thanks CPT Romanowski, you da man with da money! (Gottcha, and you thought your picture was corrupt, guess again!)

This week we went to visit the school in Ad Dwar to verify the delivery of the furniture. We also delivered all of the Clothes, School Supplies, Dolls and Stuffed Animals you sent. The head mistress was very happy with everything we brought. She locked it up for the students when they return in early spring for school. In Iraq we found out that

not too many people actually know when the school is on or off. After two translators and some civilians in the area, nobody knew if they were there or not. Turns out, they are on summer break. Just so you know they are on break until 01 Oct! Can you imagine 4 months of summer break, awesome! Here is picture of some Iraqi boys we gave a few soccer balls too.



Here is a picture of the playground on the school grounds.



This will be our next project after the meeting hall construction is completed. We are looking at starting construction in about two weeks or so. The building will serve as a meeting place for families, school conferences and town meetings. Here is a picture of the head mistress, her assistant, and their two girls.



We also were able to get some teaching manuals from one of LTC Garrisons good friends. Here are

the two girls with the books they are going to get translated for use. The Headmistress was very thankful for the books, but, refused a picture with them.



SPC Grinage with two of the girls from the Ad Dwar school.

On the way to the school children lined the sides of the roads in hopes we would give them some candy. According to the rules and regulations we are not allowed to give them anything. So, you know we did the right thing.



SPC Andrea's is seen below in this powerful pose.



He is posing like a true Calvin Klein model. Too bad he was just waiting for the Porta John.

A special thanks to all of you donated the clothes, school supplies, stuff animals, and other fine gifts. Mrs. Bassham, the children give you special thanks for all of your efforts. It was very well appreciated. We will take pictures of them handing out everything when they return in a few months.

If anybody would like to send things for the school, please send it to the following address:

**CPT Kevin Steyer
HHC 121 Sig
OIF 2, FOB Danger
APO, AE 09392**

Right now school is out, so if you could send out door clothes, soccer, basketballs, footballs, and outdoor recreation toys it would be greatly appreciated. Everything helps these days. Thanks for your support and see you all next week.

A/115th SIG

Mission First!!

Another seven days down here in Iraq for Alpha Company of the 115th Signal Battalion. The Alabama National Guard unit continues the march for Operation Iraqi Freedom II. A number of accomplishments mark this week for the soldiers, both as individuals and as team members.

The Alpha Company Basketball Classic has drawn to a close, with one team as the undisputed champions. Lieutenant Chris Carnley and Specialist Chris Stokes went undefeated in the contest. A total of 22 Alpha Company soldiers participated, with teams drawn at random. The winners received a \$30.00 AAFEES gift certificate from the American Red Cross for their efforts.

The newly constructed MWR (Morale Welfare Recreation) building is now "powered up." On Thursday, electricity was run to the Alpha Company MWR, which overlooks the lake here at FOB Danger. The facility is the result of the soldier's hard work, as well as the initiative to improve their surroundings. It was built under the close supervision of Staff Sergeant Charles Newton.

Last but not least, congratulations are in order for one member of the F18 TACSAT team. Susan Buggell has been promoted to the rank of E-4. Specialist Buggell is a member of the F18 team. She was officially "pinned" during a ceremony at the NC 30 site.

In addition, Staff Sergeant Phyllis Weldon conducted classes this week on the proper PMCS of vehicles and equipment. Staff Sergeant Weldon, a member of the 115th maintenance section of Alpha Company, is just one example of

the 115th's focus here in Iraq: mission first.

*Specialist Sonya Harris
18 June 2004*

C/711th SIG

Hello families and friends back home. C/711 Signal Battalion has survived another week of high temperatures. As we are nearing the half way point of our tour, I'd like to share a few of the happenings this past week. First of all, we had a great visit with our embedded NBC 15 News Reporter, John Watkins. We all had a good time recording our messages to loved ones. There were also stories within stories that John captured during the two weeks he has been with us. Upon his departure, we presented him with a flag from our Company and it turned out to be a very emotional moment for all involved. Somehow he represented our link to home and we all wanted to send a piece of us with him.



John Watkins, LT Beber and SFC Green



NC 14 "Thanks John"

Also this week we celebrated a birth (times 2) and a birthday! SGT Daryl Weeks and his wife Tara are proud to announce the healthy arrival of their 3 month premature

twin girls, Emma and Ella. SGT Weeks was fortunate to be on the phone with his mother at the hospital when they were born and he was reportedly happy to hear their healthy cries!



SGT Week's BIG SMILE at the sound of twin girls.

Later he and his buddies broke out the cigars to celebrate.



Proud Papa and his military family!

In the Transmission Section Tamara Britt celebrated her 29th Birthday. For a present, the section all chipped in and bought her a "Gift Certificate" to the FOB Danger beauty shop (who said there is no time for beauty amongst the bullets!). She spent the day getting pampered with a manicure, pedicure, hair cut and hair removal! Happy Birthday Tamara!



Birthday girl Tamara and Section Sergeant SFC Vernie Heard

We also had the privilege of pinning a fine solider, PFC

Brandon Henson to the rank of SPECIALIST. Now you're even more "special" than you were before Brandon – keep up the good work!



Specialist Brandon Henson

In closing, as you already know we were privileged last week to be awarded the Big Red One Combat Patch on the anniversary of D-Day, 06 Jun 04. To show our pride in serving our country, the 1st Infantry Division and the 121st Signal Battalion, we wasted no time getting our patches sewn on! We couldn't pass the opportunity to photograph it either!



Wearing the Patch with Pride

I know how proud all of you are of your soldiers! Keep up the support and keep putting on a smiley face! We'll all get through this together with our heads held high! Till next time, Charlie Out.



B/279th SIG

The Army's MWR program looks out for the morale and welfare of soldiers and provides recreational facilities and events. A small, though important, part of their mission is providing phones and internet to soldiers stationed around the world. B/279th Signal Battalion, has been tasked with providing the largest of three of these "internet cafes" at our location in Iraq. A major reason that we were tasked for this mission is that we have "data assets," that is, soldiers who work with computer networks.



We have between 800 and 1000 soldiers a day using the computers and phones to stay in touch with family and current events.

Over the last few days, we have been building booths for the phones and computers. This will allow the users to enjoy a sense of privacy in their conversations. Staff Sgt Julius Moore, NCOIC, calls the project "a concerted effort" because several of our personnel have volunteered to help. When we again open our doors, we will have 28 computers, 11 Segovia phones, and 24 AT&T phones. Soon we expect to expand our services even more, with a total of 50 computers and 20 Segovia phones.



There are six individuals representing each section of our operation that sign people in and out, check phones and computers for damage, keep the area clean, and answer any questions. There are also four personnel who maintain the system, from installing satellites to contacting our service provider to maintaining the computers and servers.



These soldiers provide a way for hundreds of soldiers to talk to or email their families every day. There is no better way to keep up morale so far from home.

B/125th SIG

Summer is starting to really beat down on us here in Kirkuk. The average temperature here is at least 110 degrees in the shade. Walking around outside feels like taking a hair dryer and blowing it in your face. It is unbelievable and daily life becomes even more miserable. We are continuing to work several projects even with the heat. We have created an outstanding wire team and they are currently working a project to put voice and data lines into the

container city where we all live. We visited the civil military operations center in the city of Kirkuk and witnessed an interesting religious ceremony. We sent four people out on leave and we promoted PFC Brinkley, an outstanding soldier who likes to run around with squirt guns in his free time, to Specialist. Overall, a unique week that just flew by.

Our wire team, commonly referred to as "cable dogs", is a combined team from NC63 and NC62 led by SSG Brown and made up of SPC Lopez, SPC Kaimulua, SPC Rodriguez, and SGT Hall and has been cleaning up wire around the base and running wire to establish new connections between buildings. The wire clean up project has given 2nd Brigade a great looking command post. The current project, another first in Iraq, has them running cable across several miles establishing a connection from two different sides of a very large Air Field. This project is hard manual labor and every day I see the wire team soaked in sweat and tired. SSG Brown and his crew are working hand in hand with Air Force communications specialists to accomplish these many tasks. The strong Army and Air Force relationship that we maintain is unique here in Kirkuk and has become a role model for much larger forward operating bases near Baghdad.

Late in the week, we took a quick trip out the Civil Military Operations Center in Kirkuk. The civil military operations center is referred to as CMOC and is the



interface between the local Iraqi community leaders and the military. Civil Affairs soldiers are culturally trained and have some skills in languages. We have been out there many times to coordinate with the local Iraqi Telecom representatives and we have a joint



training project with Civil Affairs soldiers to assist them in use of their radio and telephone equipment. This trip out to visit the CMOC was scheduled around a dinner and a religious ceremony conducted by the Sufi cult of the Islamic religion.



Sufi religion, one of the oldest sects of Islam, requires a person to prove their faith by inflicting pain and torture on themselves. This is preceded by much ritual dancing and singing that basically works the guys into frenzy. As soon as a Sufi feels ready they begin by eating glass, eating fire and move

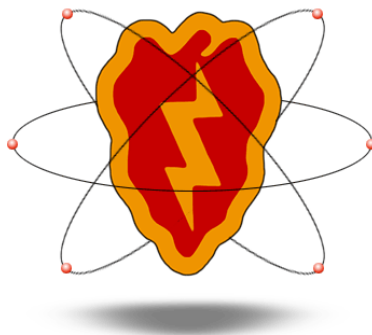


up the pain ladder. Stabbing large stakes through their bodies and even pounding large knives into their heads seems to be normal Friday night affairs for these individuals. I personally have never seen anything like it. It was enough to make my mouth drop open, especially as they tried to get me to pull a knife out of one man's head and I could not do it. A lot of soldiers from the company (SFC Harbst, SGT Miller, SPC Busby, SPC Nixon, SGT Macias, SPC Ivey, SGT Camacho, SGT Gowie, SGT Horne, SPC Cleveland, SPC Vasquez, SPC McBurney, SSG Heuring, SPC Cusimano, SPC Vidaurri, CPT Calhoun, PFC Duran, SGT Knaus) had the opportunity to see a rare event, and for those that did not faint (I would never admit it was SGT Camacho, SPC Ivey, SPC Cleveland, SSG Heuring) they seem to really enjoy the ritual.



For B 125 Signal this was just another week gone with hundred degree temperatures, signal projects and religious ceremonies. Time here in Iraq continues to go by and we continue to do our best. Soldiers in the company hate the heat, hate the stress, hate the late mail, and hate the lack of leave

slots but they continue to do their jobs and do them well. We appreciate all the support from the Family Readiness Group and all the efforts you continually put forth to help us here in Iraq.



RUMOR MILL

Rumor: 1ID will redeploy early so that we can prepare for a deployment to Afghanistan.

Fact: Completely false. There has been no change to our deployment timeline in support of OIF II.

Chaplain

A biology teacher once brought a cocoon to class and put it in a glass box with a warming lamp. About a week later, the students saw a small opening appear on the cocoon. Then, the cocoon started to shake and, suddenly, tiny antennae emerged, followed by a head and tiny front feet. The students watched the progress of the emerging insect throughout the day. By noon, it had freed its listless wings and the colors revealed that it was to be a Monarch Butterfly. It wriggled and shook, but try as it might, it could not seem to force its body through the small opening. One student decided to snip off the end of the cocoon to help the insect. Out it plopped. However, only the top half of it looked like a butterfly. The insect crawled away, dragging its useless wings, and died.

The next day the biology teacher explained that the butterfly's struggle to get out through the tiny opening is necessary in order to force fluids from the swollen body into the wings so they will be strong enough to fly. Without the struggle, the wings never develop.

In the same way, the struggles we experience in life serve to make us stronger when they are embraced. Many of us struggle against the struggle, when we should struggle *through* the struggle.

The Bible challenges us to be strong in adversity. Proverbs 24:10 says, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small."